**Losses due to Soil Erosion**

1834. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the country was suffering heavy losses due to massive soil erosion; and

(b) if so, the measures proposed to maintain a balance between nature and development, ensuring environment-friendly growth?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALLU): (a) and (b) Soil erosion takes place due to natural factors like unstable geological formations of mountains heavy rains, cloudburst and biotic factors like faulty land use practices, construction activities, inadequate tree cover etc. in the catchment areas of the major river systems. It is a major problem on degraded hilly slopes and areas prone to floods. However, there is no alarming report that the country is suffering from an unusual and unprecedented situation of soil erosion.

Checking soil erosion and denudation in the catchment areas of rivers, lakes and reservoirs in the interest of soil and water conservation is one of the basic objectives of the National Forest Policy, 1988. The measures taken to check soil erosion include forest protection activities and Joint Forest Management Programme, National Afforestation Programme for plantation on degraded forest land, watershed development and soil conservation works on agricultural land etc.

Special legislative measures like the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 are also in place to maintain a balance between nature and development. This Act regulates diversion of forest lands for non-forestry purposes and also provides for compensatory afforestation on equivalent/more area of non-forest/degraded forest land.

All these measures help to maintain a balance between nature and development, ensuring environment-friendly growth.

**Testing of Environmental Product**

1835. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state: